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Bush faces tough fight

By Dan Thomasson

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WASHINGTON — For George Bush, head of the U. S. liaison office in Peking, the road to Senate confirmation for his latest government job — director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) — appears long and arduous but not impassable at this point.

Strongly in his favor are his former membership in Congress as a representative from Texas and the fact he generally is regarded by republicans and Democrats alike as a "nice guy."

Working against him is his long partisan background, particularly his chairmanship of the Republican National Committee during most of the Watergate scandal.

Although the GOP committee and Bush were not tainted by Watergate, Bush's steady defense of President Nixon throughout the scandal is expected to bring more than normal scrutiny by the Senate Armed Services Committee which must approve his nomination.

There also will be questions about \$106,000 Bush received from a questionable Nixon campaign funding organization for his unsuccessful 1970 effort to win the Texas Senate seat won by Lloyd M. Bentsen, a Democratic presidential hopeful.

Chairman Frank Church, D-Idaho, of the Senate select committee investigating the CIA has said he will vote against confirming Bush, as has Sen. William Proxmire, D-Wis. And Sen. Gary Hart, D-Colo., a member of both the Church committee and the Armed Services Committee said the Bush nomination "gives me a lot of problems."

With the current prospect of a drawn-out confirmation process, Ford has asked current CIA Director William Colby not to be in a big hurry to clean out his desk and set up private legal practice.

Sen. Sam Nunn, D-Ga., a member of the Armed Services Committee, said he believes the panel should take its time but he "sees no reason why a politician should be precluded from that kind of job just because he is a politician."

"It seems inconsistent to me that those people who long have contended that the problem with the CIA has been its in-breeding at the top now say that an outsider should not be permitted to have the directorship," Nunn said.

Sen. William D. Hathaway, D-Maine, who served with Bush when he was a member of the House, said he would find it difficult to vote against Bush for other than the "gravest of reasons." He said he regarded Bush as a straight thinker and a likable person.

"What's wrong with being a politician?" he said. "It makes him more sensitive to the people in an agency where that appears to have been needed for some time."

A similar opinion was given by Sen. Mark O. Hatfield, R-Ore., who said a man's participation in politics is no reason "not to confirm him even for the CIA."

Hatfield's comments were important in that they appeared to represent the view of liberal Republicans whose votes Bush's opponents would need to prevent the confirmation.